

# **MiTT HAPPENS**

*Insight into Advising the Iraqi Army*

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## Introduction

“MiTT Happened” to me in November 2005. Being the junior Major with no combat experience, I was the obligatory choice from the Combined Arms Tactics Directorate (CATD) to serve as a Battalion Military Transition Team (MiTT) Chief to fulfill Request-For-Forces (RFF) 510 in late November 2005. The following article will be a brief description and synopsis of “what I learned” in my twelve months as an American Military Advisor in Iraq. I intend to describe the environment of where I operated and hope to develop suggestions to educate infantry leaders at all levels regarding Military Transition Teams. This article focuses on my experiences while operating in western Baghdad from February, 2006, to February, 2007.

Though there are too many to articulate here, I will focus around specific lessons learned regarding the employment, integration, and conduct of the counterinsurgency fought by the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 6<sup>th</sup> Iraqi Division, during that same period of time. I worked with four separate coalition brigade combat teams, seven different coalition battalions, several different units of the Iraqi Police (IP) and Iraqi National Police (NP), and an SF-ODA Team or two. I have seen combat from the perspective of someone seemingly caught in the middle: I was assigned to the Iraq Assistance Group and was the link between the coalition forces and the Iraqi Battalion I advised. I was held accountable by both coalition partner units and my Iraqi counterpart to produce results. Initially, I was on the receiving end of what first appeared to be a Sunni Insurgency. Over time it would evolve into a “low-boil” civil war along the Sunni and Shia divide. My MiTT Team and I were “caught in the middle trying to protect both sides, while getting attacked by both sides, trying not to take a side.”<sup>1</sup>

I hope military professionals reading this will come to understand not only the complex nature of the advisory mission, but also empathize with the particular situation of advising a foreign army embroiled in a fight that transcended military, religious, and cultural lines. The Iraqi battalion I advised was fighting enemy insurgents and foreign terrorists that supported the ousted Sunni religious Islamic sect. All the while, it was getting infiltrated by a large militia force comprising the rival Shia sect that formed to foment the Shia assumption of Iraqi political power. Those in the Iraq Security Forces that would not cooperate with these Shia militias were threatened, targeted, and eventually killed. The pitfall of getting lost in this chaos was very real. By focusing on what my team and I were sent there to accomplish, and work to make positive change for the things we could in fact change, is what ultimately made us successful. In this manner, we kept our focus, challenged our Iraqi counterparts to do better, and ultimately kept our sanity.

## Background

As a MiTT Advisor, my principal duties entailed leading an 11-man Transition Team to advise and train an Iraqi Infantry Battalion Commander and maintain

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<sup>1</sup> “Sectarian Ties Weaken Duty’s Call for Iraqi Forces,” by Marc Santora  
*The New York Times*: December 28, 2006. pp, 1-2.

tactical over-watch of a 750-man Iraqi Army Battalion in combat. I am not a Special Forces officer. I don't speak Arabic. My cultural understanding of the Middle East was restricted to cultural briefings by the Army and what I read in professional journals and books. At the time, I had not even deployed to fight the Global War on Terror, having spent the previous two and a half years as a Small Group Instructor for the Infantry Captains Career Course. Since I was a supposed "expert" on tactics and small unit leadership, I suspect on the surface I looked like a perfect choice for this new initiative that would evolve to become America's strategic exit strategy from Iraq. However, in my heart, I believed that I was woefully unqualified to assume this important mission.

I would later discover, that I, in fact, possessed all the necessary knowledge to perform my duties. What I lacked in knowledge of the Arabic language, I made up for by being a quick study of the Iraqi people. I found that I gained as much insight into the Iraqi/Arab culture by watching the movie, "*The Godfather*," as I did reading The 27 Articles, by T.E. Lawrence. My impression of working with my Iraqi Battalion Commander, LTC Sabah Gati Kadim Al-Fadily, was somewhat akin to being in a militarized version of the TV drama, "*The Sopranos*." The tribal loyalties; religious alliances; and the aspects of prestige, influence, power, money, and revenge played heavily on the motives of those I advised. The aspect of corruption was never so much a notion of "if," but rather, "to what degree." I also discovered my natural lack of patience only became exacerbated by this environment. However, I found that my sense of humor, my ability to joke about myself and joke with my Iraqis, enabled me to get my points across to the Iraqi leadership with an emphasis of "pressured humor." I used levity to get their attention and make them laugh, but I always had an underlying principle and motive for making the joke. The weird Iraqi ability to be deceitful while communicating ideas and stories enabled them to "get the point" rather quickly when I used this technique.

I also became pretty adept at deception. I lived on the same small FOB with three other battalion Transition Teams; their Iraqi battalions; a Brigade National Police Team (NPTT) and its Iraqi headquarters; and the 1-6 IA Brigade HQ and its MiTT; in addition to my own. Infiltration into the Iraqi Army by the Shia militias, most notably the Cleric Moktada Al Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) and the Iranian Islamic Supreme Council in Iraq (SCIRI)-influenced Badr Corps, was very common in our area of operations. Though never explicitly stated, the Iranian influence in both of these militias seemed readily apparent if one looked hard enough. Parts of the Iraqi Army, and seemingly the entire National Police and regular Iraqi Police, were openly sympathetic to and supported these Shia militias. Murders, kidnappings, and coercion by this militia, most notably JAM, were common-place, and my team and I had to walk a tight rope of trust, security, and fear with the 4/ 1-6 IA battalion. I learned to tell my local national interpreters only what they needed to know. I learned to believe only half of what the Iraqi leadership would tell me. I alternated my visits with the Iraqis every day and varied my patrol schedule. Planning for missions got pretty creative and telling the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion about a sensitive mission, particularly in a Shia area requiring their participation, forced me to inform them two to three hours before "hit" time. My team and I had to exercise the art of misinformation with OPSEC regarding the Iraqi Army: we had to tell enough of the

truth to be believed and to motivate action on the Iraqi's behalf, but could not divulge specifics about times, unit actions or upcoming operations. "Inshallah," the Arabic phrase for "God-willing," so often used by the Iraqis when responding to my requests and to my team's desires, similarly became our responses to many Iraqi Army requests for information concerning equipment and upcoming missions.

I never thought being a good con-artist was a useful quality until I became an advisor. I developed an ability to communicate ideas and concepts I desired my Iraqi counterparts to adopt by convincing them it would be personally, professionally, and politically in their best interests to do. I did my best to make my counterpart look good in all endeavors. My team's best efforts and ideas became the Iraqi's best efforts and "their" ideas. My team and I introduced the art of information operations. We taught our Iraqi battalion how to use an S9 (civil military officer) and created flyers, advertising the 4/1-6 IA's recent actions and military successes and providing phone numbers to the locals to call to report enemy and criminal activity. Instead of viewing the attendance to Neighborhood and District Action Councils (NACs and DACs) as obligatory events, my team and I taught the Iraqi leadership a different way of viewing these events. Concerned Iraqi people chose to attend these neighborhood meetings to help solve problems, but sadly, many lacked any confidence in their own security forces to secure them. The Action Councils, over time, became vehicles for positive change regarding the perception of Iraqi Security forces by their own citizens. We made them look good to their Army and to their communities. They needed to be perceived as heroes to their people, heroes their country so desperately needed and still demand today.

I was further blessed to have the most talented MiTT that was assembled as part of the RFF 510 tasking. Compared with many other MiTTs, this was an exception to the rule, rather than the rule itself. Thrown together from across the Army, many Transition Teams contained men who lacked the training, aptitude, and discipline to serve in these autonomous roles. However, my team was a composite of specialists in their fields. I had four officers and three NCOs of my required eleven-man team, all differing MOS-types and tailored for their job-specific advisory roles. These specific roles were in the intelligence, maneuver, logistics, transportation, maintenance and communications fields. Men like SFC Terry Shaw, CPT Jeremy Gettig, CW3 Paul Algarin, CPT Ken Frank, SFC Jeremy Lerette, and SFC Joseph Grimes really made my job easy and enabled the team to excel in almost every area of endeavor. I pushed them hard, held them to high standards, abused them sufficiently, and did not praise them enough. They did their best to work in roles in which they weren't accustomed. Aside from working as advisors to a foreign Army, none of them had ever done mounted or dismounted patrols before, and, certainly, none of them had ever worked for a demanding and impatient Infantry officer such as me. Both my team and I developed profound respect for each other and learned a great deal about each other in the process. I believe they, more than any of my efforts, were directly responsible for the outstanding success enjoyed by MiTT 0614. (See Figure 1).

I was, however, missing a medic, a fires and effects officer and a fires and effects NCO. I was informed that my dedicated U.S. Coalition unit would provide these individuals once I got into theater. In reality, I received four, sometimes five

augmentees from every partnered battalion I worked with in my year's time. Most were lower enlisted and lacked the necessary experience and training to adequately advise their Iraqi counterparts. That being said, I "played the cards I was dealt" and used these augmentees in not only a force protection role for the MiTT, but also in an advisory role to their Iraqi counterparts. This was challenging at first, but most Soldiers jumped at the chance to execute these new and interesting roles. Many found it rewarding, and most didn't want to return to their parent unit, where their roles in daily patrols really wore them down. Even though at first glance, these augmentee soldiers appeared to be insufficient to act as advisors, I was personally surprised at how many of these Soldiers and junior NCOs excelled once presented with the challenge to be on a MiTT team. I did my best to make these guys a part of my team and rewarded them for great work accordingly. If challenged and expected to do so, it's amazing what the American Soldier can and will accomplish outside of their skill set. I found that the old adage, "people rise to a level expected of them" is very true. I did not receive any additional Infantrymen for force protection and remained the only Infantry officer on my team.

### **From Here to There**

In January, 2006, I departed for north Fort Hood, Texas, for the 45-day Transition Team pre-deployment training. (This training is now 90 days long and is held at Fort Riley, Kansas). The training I received as a MiTT advisor was abysmal. We were treated like mobilized National Guardsmen, and very little of the training dealt with training Iraqis specifically. Most of it was mandatory pre-deployment training and force protection TTPs. As I understand it, Fort Riley now has a more comprehensive program that treats the Transition Team mission in much the same way that the old Viet Nam era Special Forces advisors had been treated. This training now includes robust language training and instruction steeped in the newly-codified COIN doctrine. After mandatory training stops at Camp Buehring, Kuwait and Camp Taji, Iraq, my team and I started our journey with urban combat in the tumultuous west Baghdad area of operations.

The neighborhoods of Baghdad are highly secularized. Shia neighborhoods were, at first glance, calm and relatively peaceful. Hallmarked by cheap real estate encrusted with large amounts of garbage and livestock, the Shia neighborhoods contained large masses of outwardly friendly poor people. This surprised me, because they were living on top of each other and lacked even the basics in human services. It was amazing to witness the stunning poverty of these people. It was sometimes ironic: one guy lived in a corrugated steel and sod house, but also owned a satellite dish for direct TV! These neighborhoods contained weapons caches in sensitive sites such as Mosques, political offices, and schools. They typically harbored robust numbers of the Shia militias. Sunnis were forced to flee their homes under the penalty of death, did so, and Shia militiamen and sympathizers took refuge in these properties. The Iraqi Police and Special Police were able to move with impunity in these areas. They often protected Jaysh al Mahdi's lines of communication and served as reconnaissance for JAM death squads. Some IPs even allowed the Mahdi Army to use their equipment, uniforms, and traffic control

points as observation posts to look for Sunnis to kidnap. The Iraqi Army usually enjoyed a neutral reception here. Typical violence in this area included explosively formed projectile (EFP) IEDs, small ambushes, and kidnapping. Sunni VBIEDs were often a threat to mass groups of Shias, as well as Coalition forces in these areas.

The Sunni neighborhoods included larger, more extravagant, gated houses; nicer streets; better automobiles; and a subdued population that was very distrustful of Coalition and Iraqi forces. Many Sunnis became displaced persons over time from the encroaching Shia militias. The Sunnis, the old regime favored sect, now lived life as the “ousted” and hated minority. They passionately distrusted the Government of Iraq. Their neighborhoods usually held large caches for Sunni extremists. Oftentimes, these muhallas (or neighborhoods) were support zones for Sunni terrorists as well as Sunni insurgents from outside Baghdad. Insurgent groups like: the 1920 Revolutionary Brigade, Jaysh al-Iraqia, Ansar al-Sunna, and Jama al-Tawid (Al Qaeda) exerted strong influence in many Sunni neighborhoods. The Iraqi Police being nearly 90% Shia in composition, kept clear of the heavily populated Sunni areas. I never saw too much police presence in Sunni muhallas, and the Sunni insurgents often attacked the Iraqi Army with more vigor than they did the coalition forces. Snipers were a particularly serious concern in these Sunni areas. Sophistication in training and equipment made them particularly lethal. A foreign Sunni terrorist group, Juba, or “Ghost,” spouted rhetoric that it had infiltrated two battalions of trained snipers to operate in Baghdad. This group advertised the shootings of U.S. and Iraqi Soldiers on their website and were largely responsible for the introduction of armor-defeating ammunition infiltrated into Baghdad.

Both the Sunni and Shia people routinely blocked their roads with whatever materials were available. Over time, mixed-populated areas created what became battle-grounds for sectarian violence. My team viewed western Baghdad as a series of small cities within a city. As time wore on, these sectarian divides became like fault lines in an earthquake, where sectarian violence would flare-up for weeks at a time. Multitudes of displaced persons either moved into an area of like religious sect, or fled the country altogether. Ethnic cleansing, murder, and kidnapping became the norm along these fault lines. At one point, upwards of about 30 bodies were discovered “dumped” in the streets daily in west Baghdad. I found myself not necessarily focusing on how many bodies would be “discovered” and reported on a daily basis; rather, I would wonder about the number of bodies and criminal activities that went undiscovered and unreported. (See Figure 2).

### **The 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 1-6 Iraqi Army**

The 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 1-6 IA, was 75% Shia, and most of its Soldiers lived in the Baghdad area. LTC Sabah was a Shia and lived in a predominantly Shia neighborhood in the 1-6 IA area of operations (AO). Because of his successes with us in his battle-space fighting both Shia militia, as well as Sunni insurgents, he himself eventually became targeted by Jaysh al-Mahdi. During the time my team and I worked with him, his brother and his Executive Officer were murdered by JAM, and he and his family were routinely threatened by them in attempts to influence him to do their bidding. Over the year I served with him, LTC Sabah would have five of

his officers assassinated and several wounded in murder attempts. One of my interpreters was kidnapped, held for ransom, and eventually murdered. Largely seen as the driving force behind Sabah, I would eventually be targeted with death from Jaysh al-Mahdi. A price was placed on my head, and I became a lucrative target to anyone looking to gain profit from JAM. One attempt on my life resulted in the death of my gunner in an IED strike that turned out to be an explosively-formed projectile IED. The actual ambush occurred on a joint night patrol with a platoon from the 4/1-6 IA and members of the Iraqi Police. Later, U.S. intelligence reports confirmed that we had been betrayed by the Iraqi Police: an organization that is so heavily infiltrated by the secretive Shia militias, they routinely are complicit with Shia militia intelligence sharing and operations. Even with little forewarning, the Iraqi Police were able to set-up this complex ambush in the JAM-sympathetic neighborhood of Hurryia within 30 minutes of my patrol brief to both IA and IP leadership. The battle-space got to be so dangerous that my boss, the Brigade MiTT Chief, would also be killed by an IED strike that many attributed to JAM.

LTC Sabah and the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion was known throughout Baghdad. He was seen as a hero to many Shia neighborhoods and a villain to some Sunni neighborhoods. He was routinely accused of stealing from local vendors, extorting money from Sunni merchants, paying off Shia leaders, and generally building his own bank account with a percentage of the salaries of his Soldiers. He was even alleged to have been paid by Sunni insurgents to transport weapons to the Sunni insurgents still residing in heavily populated Shia areas. Our intelligence confirmed much of this, but even with all these criminal aspects, he remained an aggressive and effective prosecutor of COIN in west Baghdad. As ironic as it seemed, LTC Sabah was one of the few dependable Iraqi battalion commanders in the 6<sup>th</sup> IA Division. He would aggressively seek contact with the enemy and routinely checked on his Jundi (soldiers). He, at least, exhibited these qualities when we were watching him, and he was backed with U.S. support. Because of his apparent aggressive nature and decisive actions, Coalition forces largely tolerated his less-than-desirable aspects of corruption for personal gain.

Sabah routinely used connections he had within the Iraqi government to seek personal gain. He was able to exploit his influence, or “wasta,” as the Iraqis refer to their ability to leverage power, to buy badly needed uniforms and supplies for his soldiers. As his advisor, I found myself having to stomach most of Sabah’s antics to get him to comply with plans I developed in order to train his battalion and work with Coalition forces and with the surrounding communities. I originally attempted to get him fired by working through U.S. channels, but since his government enjoys sovereignty and the IA was dubbed “fully operational, capable,” they ultimately make the decision of who is promoted and who is fired. Because of this, I eventually chose to focus on Sabah’s good attributes and do my best to assuage the bad ones. The alternative of having an ineffectual and cowardly Iraqi commander influenced my thinking to ultimately support LTC Sabah’s leadership and work to develop him as a commander and his battalion as an effective fighting force. If I spent time and energy solely focusing on Sabah’s criminal behavior and his superior’s efforts to enable JAM infiltration into the Army, I would have gone mad. I instead chose to focus on what I could affect and change for the better. Once I gained rapport with

LTC Sabah, I enjoyed support from his battalion, and my advisors were able to institute positive change in their respective areas.

### **Know their History, Get Rapport...but Be Yourself**

Gaining and maintaining rapport is the most important aspect of being a successful advisor. It might be true that you are a military prodigy. You may also be competent with the Arab language and an expert with the Arab culture. You might be all these things; however, you will not be successful advising the Iraqis without first gaining both personal and professional rapport with your Iraqi counterpart. This important aspect also applies to coalition commanders partnered with Iraqi forces. I gained rapport by accomplishing three things: I understood the motivations of the people I advise, I demonstrated a desire to help them in word and deed, and I did my best to act like myself in all situations.

If you want to take any military organization somewhere, you first have to know where it has been. The 4/1-6 IA Battalion was going on its third year of development, and my MITT Team was the fourth one it had, in fact, worked with during that same time period. Its officer corps was roughly a 30% mix of former regime officers. Their Jundi (soldiers) were largely locally hired from the Taji and Baghdad areas. As noted earlier, 75% were Shia. Most were under-equipped, underpaid, and poorly-led and lived in almost unimaginable fear. I have never seen such a traumatized people before. Seemingly, fear and mistrust of everything and everyone was part of being an Iraqi. After 15 days of consecutive work, the Jundi would receive five days off to go home, pay their families, and see to their family and tribal obligations. When going home, all Jundi infiltrated home at night, and in civilian clothing, for fear of being followed, targeted, and killed by both Sunni and Shia extremists. The Sunni terrorists wanted the Jundi dead because they believed the Shia-dominated government was specifically targeting Sunni population centers. By killing the ISF forces, the Sunni could eliminate their perceived enemies and discredit the Shia-dominated Government of Iraq. The Shia extremists would want certain jundi killed because many had refused to join or cooperate with the Shia militia, Jaysh al-Mahdi. Many Iraqi officers and NCOs quit because of threats they and their families received from JAM. It was not uncommon for a Jundi to move his family three or four times in a period of six months!

The ingrained psychological distrust of each other, which many attribute to Saddam Hussein's thirty-year reign of fear, profoundly impacted the psyche of all the Iraqi people. The paternalistic nature of their culture, coupled with the strong top-down hierarchical structure of their military and police, often led to extreme micromanagement. LTC Sabah, for example, directed EVERYTHING his commanders and staff did or failed to do. Commanders had zero initiative. I had to personally engage the IA Battalion Commander if I thought a machine gun required repositioning! Corruption, as well as an arrogant disregard for those in the commander's charge, was pervasive – particularly by the old regime officers. To even enter the Iraqi Army, a prospective Jundi was required to pay a substantial bribe to the Iraqi recruiters. Promotions for officers similarly worked in this manner. Many Iraqi commanders engaged in racketeering and extortion as well as prostitution. One 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion company commander was, in fact, relieved because



he was found to be working with prostitutes rather than attending to the security concerns of his assigned zone. LTC Sabah was also pretty adept at skimming money off the top of his battalion's pay-roll every month. A new automated payroll system tied to an ID card helped solve this problem somewhat, but since all Jundi are paid in cash, it was always difficult to adequately monitor every dollar of the payroll. Soldiers in 4/1-6 IA battalion feared their battalion commander and largely believed he was corrupt, but their fear of him outweighed their distrust. Sabah was rumored to have had a couple officers of his "disappear" because they had informed on him to the Iraqi Brigade Commander of his extra-curricular exploits. Islam may have been their religion, but they worshiped the almighty dollar.

To gain LTC Sabah's loyalty, I had to demonstrate I was there to serve his best interests. This meant spending long hours into the night "socializing" with him and his officers in his office. We talked about family, hobbies, and interests and watched a lot of Arab TV. I drank chai tea, smoked cigarettes, and tried hard to adjust my western internal clock to a more amicable Iraqi clock: they normally socialize from 2100 hrs at night to about 0300 hrs in the morning. Paying homage to the tradition of Arab hospitality is huge. I came to understand that to eat a meal with them was akin to demonstrating loyalty, respect, and brotherhood -- all at the same time. As such, official business and plans took place after a meal -- not before. As many Coalition leaders are fond of saying, "it ain't official until you pull goat." I listened mostly and observed my surroundings. I paid attention to the various cliques inside the battalion and inside the officer corps. My other advisors did the same with their counterparts, and we developed a fairly healthy understanding of the human dynamics within the organization itself. I developed a mental list of needs and wants regarding the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, and I later was able to leverage these needs and wants with money to get LTC Sabah to agree with my list of changes to make the organization better. The \$2500 per month Transition Force Fund (TFF) fund, available to transition team advisors, allowed us to buy the Iraqis needed office equipment, furniture, automation equipment, and repair parts. It also became my financial leverage to influence Sabah. Previous MiTT Teams failed to use this available resource. We used our TFF funds to make their lives easier and to show that we cared about them. It also provided further evidence of our desire to make our Iraqis better at soldiering.

To gain LTC Sabah's trust and confidence, I went on combat missions nearly daily with his platoons. My MiTT and I traveled in three vehicle, 11-man patrols. We did a lot of unilateral missions where we inspected traffic control point (TCPs) and company combat outposts (COPs), attended NAC meetings, and conducted human atmospheric. We also would take Iraqi platoons out on daily reconnaissance foot patrols, handing out flyers and executing snap tactical vehicle inspections. We went on combined night patrols to conduct targeted raids or ambush known insurgent-areas. I tried to show that at the battalion level, LTC Sabah's presence was needed with his platoons. Just as it works within our doctrine, effective battalions are defined by trained and lethal platoons. The Infantrymen must get out on foot and engage the population, as well as the enemy. Before my team and I arrived, the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion merely manned TCPs and not much else. The IA Jundi grew to love us: at times, we checked on them more than their own leadership did.

For the first few months, we did not even have a partnered U.S. battalion. The MiTT became the few Americans to be seen operating in the 4/1-6 IA AO. Moreover, we got pretty creative working with U.S. SOF. I pressured both the local ODA Team and LTC Sabah to work together and executed a lot of joint raids with the SF-trained 4/1-6 IA Strike/Recon Platoon. The ODA Team needed Iraqi Army participation for legitimacy to execute any mission, and I needed my Iraqis trained with close target reconnaissance and raids. During the months of May and June, 2006, we executed well over 20 combined/joint raids all over our AO with the ODA and their Iraqi disciples. After three months of steady patrols and targeted missions, I had soundly burned out my MiTT. All of them, not being infantry, thought I was nuts. However, what I had, in fact, done was establish rapport with LTC Sabah and his leaders. Sabah and his commanders saw a U.S. MiTT team willing to share his hardships, get out on the “Arab street,” and support his soldiers. We demonstrated our willingness to risk our lives with them, to help them and their people. In doing so, we earned their loyalty and their trust. My MiTT and I were paid a rare compliment when LTC Sabah informed his subordinates that my advisors and I “speak with his voice” three months into our tour with him.

To gain an understanding of the Arab culture and establish rapport, it was crucial to gain insight into what FM 3-24 calls a “cultural intelligence.” Being politically correct and culturally sensitive is great if you’re merely visiting an Arab country for a short period of time on a diplomatic visit, but if you want to train them and advise them in combat – you have got to get them to do things they ordinarily would not do. To understand them to the point of being able to influence them to motivate action, you must know how they think, know what motivates them, and know how they react to both danger and incentives. T.E. Lawrence, the famed British officer who assisted the Arab Revolution with the Ottoman Turks back in WWI, wrote a compelling book about his experiences known as the Seven Pillars of Wisdom. He also codified a list of recommendations regarding the advisory role of Arabs specifically, known as T.E. Lawrence’s 27 Articles. I highly recommend both of these works. Read as much as you can regarding the Arab culture. The Crisis of Islam and the Arab Mind were also tremendously useful. I also recommend you ascertain some insight into how criminal organizations operate. This is why my fascination with studying the American La Cosa Nostra, as alarming as it sounds, assisted me in understanding the motivations of many Iraqi commanders, particularly my own little “Don” that I advised. Watching Mafia movies assisted me in my ability to understand underlying motivations of the Iraqi leadership. Their Army, insurgent networks, and militias seemingly mimic each other along the lines of a La Cosa Nostra concept.

As much as I had read about “Lawrence of Arabia”, studied the Arab history and culture and even watched my fill of *The Godfather*, I found that the most compelling way to train the Iraqis was to be myself. At first I tried the subdued approach: stay quiet, put the Iraqi commander in the lead, never talk badly to the Arabs, and never insult them intentionally, and try not to do it unintentionally. I found that by adhering to all these things, I personally was getting little accomplished. At first, LTC Sabah, walked all over me because he perceived that I was weak and

uninterested. My team also became frustrated: without Sabah's approval, my MiTT could accomplish nothing with its counterparts.

About the same time I began exercising combined patrols with the Iraqis, I began to lose the subdued approach and take the direct, "in-your-face" approach. I basically became the adorable Infantry leader I know I can be. I got visibly angry when I was ignored. I talked as much with my hands as I did with my mouth. I scolded excuses when I heard them and demanded results. I told the Iraqi leaders what they needed to hear instead of what they wanted to hear. I used a lot of dry humor through my interpreters. I challenged their professional convictions and their courage when they balked at doing things my team and I wanted them to accomplish. I often cursed freely in English and Arabic to get my points across to them. My own team members were a little surprised by my theatrics, and they likened me to a "puppet-master" when working with the Iraqis. Most of my team felt I had evolved into a pretty good manipulator. I also used the TFF funds to reward good Iraqi behavior when they listened to our advice.

Pretty soon, the Iraqis learned to achieve results. More insurgents were detained; more cooperation with the community was engendered; and effective systems regarding accountability, maintenance, and logistics were established. The 4/1-6 IA Battalion went from one of the worst battalions on western Baghdad, to one of the best. My technique may not have made me popular with its Soldiers, but it gained respect from them. They knew that every action I did was for them. They knew I shared their hardships on patrol. It was in their best interests to listen to me, no matter how crazy, disagreeable, and cantankerous I may have appeared. I made their commander look good to both his chain-of-command and to the coalition leadership. I understand that this technique doesn't work for everyone, but it worked for me. The personality that had made me a successful company commander also made me a successful advisor. Pretending I was something I wasn't only got me frustrated and those around me frustrated. Temper what you may know regarding military operations and a foreign culture with aspects of your own personality. Your results will surprise you.

## **Lead by Example**

The basic concept of leadership through example resonates as strongly with Iraqi Jundi as it does with U.S. Soldiers. MiTTs and Coalition leadership that dictate action from secure Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) and only make the obligatory battlefield circulation patrols of their areas of operation will see few results in a COIN environment. To have a shot at success in combat, you must take tactical risk. To effectively lead, you must demonstrate that you are willing to share that risk with those in your charge.

Compelling Iraqi leadership to execute patrols with me was a continuous challenge. Many Iraqi company commanders, as well as the battalion commander, enjoyed the tributes of command without ever having to earn their right to command. Sitting behind their extravagant desks and chatting on their cell phones appeared to be "the right way to lead" to these officers. Unfortunately, this was another bad habit of the old Saddam regime Army. Moreover, many Coalition commanders, while

doing patrols with their own Soldiers regularly, avoided working with the Iraqi Soldiers as much as possible. Whether it was out of their “comfort zone,” or if they felt the Iraqi Army and Police weren’t to be trusted with any cooperation under any circumstance, many Coalition commanders chose to define the war in their terms solely. Though this is recently changing for the better, at the time, many U.S. battalions still view the current fight as America’s war to win in Iraq, rather than Iraq’s internal war the Iraqis must win for themselves. As Dr. Wayne Dyer, a contemporary philosopher, once said, “if you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.” U.S. commanders who correctly identified they were fighting an insurgency that was quickly escalating to a subtle civil war were able to shift their tactics to COIN and focus correctly on training the Iraqi security forces to fight and secure their own people. On the other hand, the U.S. commanders who chose to view the war as theirs to win in American terms with American resources only, certainly saw a lot of action, but they didn’t solve any significant problems associated with the insurgency, and they certainly didn’t enable the Iraqi units that replaced them when they departed the battle-space to succeed.

As a MiTT leader, I provided the proverbial “microscope” into the lives and actions of the Iraqi unit operating with Coalition forces. I found that my role in the fight was ignored by some Coalition commanders and, likewise, embraced by others. As a MiTT leader, I really only succeeded when I was able to coach both Iraqi and Coalition leaders into developing an integration of purpose; going back to the basics, regarding intelligence preparation of the battlefield and foot patrols, including battlefield enablers within shared battle-space; and building a plan to achieve clarity of thought regarding counterinsurgency. One of the big challenges when conducting COIN operations was to integrate Coalition and Iraqi units to achieve unity of effort.

### **Abolish the “Jim Crow” Laws of COIN**

Coalition units must demonstrate leadership to the Iraqi security forces by their example when conducting combat operations. Referring to the American Reconstruction Era series of laws that kept facilities, areas, and resources “separate, but equal” regarding race in the United States, the “Jim Crow Laws” for a counterinsurgency refers to the separate nature of employment by both Coalition and Iraqi units, particularly in Baghdad. This concept worked poorly in its 75 years of practice in the United States, and it worked even worse in Baghdad. Though many Coalition units and Iraqi units shared the battle-space of many areas, they seldom worked together for any long period of time, if at all. Coalition units, desiring to execute raids, special humanitarian support missions, NAC meetings, and the like requiring combined partnership to achieve perceived legitimacy, would periodically require me to provide the requisite Iraqi force for the mission set. Otherwise, daily patrolling was generally executed in a “separate-but-equal” fashion with both Coalition and Iraqi units doing their own separate patrols in the same nasty neighborhoods of Baghdad.

I believe this occurred for two reasons: first, U.S. forces lacked adequate troop strength to truly “partner” with Iraqi forces consistently to achieve combined purpose and second, U.S. forces frequently changed areas of operation to fight the elusive enemy. Destroying the enemy became the number one priority for coalition forces, as opposed to securing and stabilizing a population center in troubled neighborhoods. This “whack-a-mole” tactic merely frustrated Coalition forces and left the Iraqi Army units without consistent coalition support, training, and resources.

Coalition units and Iraqi units seemingly lacked unity of command, and therefore had no unity of effort. My MiTT and I acted as the Coalition representatives with the Iraqis and by default became the LNOs between Coalition and Iraqi forces. Being an LNO for seven different U.S. battalions in my year’s time as a MiTT Chief detracted from my primary job as an advisor and trainer. Coalition and Iraqi Army forces would leave their separate large FOBs and orbit their battle-space separately. With the exception of large, top-down planned cordon and searches, this was the norm for a long time. However, not all Coalition battalions fought COIN in this manner. LTC Van Smiley’s 1-23 IN fought COIN as a combined effort with the Iraqis and engaged the population to assist in security efforts. Its operations taught me a lot about what a coalition unit could do with the Iraqi Army, given the unit changes the way it thinks and operates. Furthermore, with the latest surge plan occurring at the end of February, 2007, the number of U.S. units and their employment has greatly changed to be more conducive to fighting a counterinsurgency by integrating elements of coalition force, Iraqi Army and Police. As I was leaving west Baghdad, the new security plan envisioned a unity of command between Iraqi Army, Police and coalition forces in dedicated partner relationships: a step in the right direction indeed.

Once on the ground, MiTTs are now getting assigned to Coalition units to assist in helping the Coalition and Iraqi commanders integrate a common purpose into their operations. I was lucky enough to be a part of a Coalition brigade combat team in my final three months in Baghdad that understood this. Coalition and Iraqi forces began living together in combat out-posts to plan and execute missions together, saturate the Iraqi neighborhoods that provide safe harbor for insurgents, and learn from each other while doing daily patrols. Through cooperation with Iraqi Army and Police, Coalition forces were able to identify the most dangerous neighborhoods and “wall” them in with concrete barriers and wire. Iraqi and Coalition forces would together control access to these neighborhoods by guarding them and working closely with the neighborhood council leadership. Controlling the borders, a COIN principle, can be applied to the sectarian nature of the Baghdad muhallas. After all, Iraqis define themselves through the communities in which they live, rather than the city from which they come. This combination of combined combat outposts and walling-in neighborhoods started to become very effective at securing the Iraqi people; gaining their trust; and, in doing so, denying terrain to the enemy.

At the end of my tour, I found myself assisting in patrol planning and integrating the Iraqi Army and Police into Coalition efforts. My team and I were able to teach LTC Sabah’s battalion staff how to execute a very rudimentary problem solving method, akin to MDMP, to effectively prosecute daily and weekly missions.

Iraqi operations officers began to battle-track, and Iraqi intelligence officers started to glean analysis from recent enemy significant activities. MiTTs can assist with the abolishment of what I term the “Jim Crow Laws” of Coin by bringing commanders from all forces together with a shared vision and purpose.

### **Do IPB & Go On Foot**

The IED threat, the biggest killer of Coalition and Iraqi forces in Iraq, can in fact, be defeated. The gee-whiz crew systems and additional armor kits do great things to disrupt a majority of remote initiation devices and prevent penetration of much shrapnel; however, technology and armor cannot defeat well hidden command wire systems and well-aimed EFPs. The best way to defeat this threat is good old fashioned IPB and developing a plan that pits your advantage against an enemy's disadvantage. Identify who the enemy is, where he wants to kill you, and bypass his kill zones or interdict his ability to emplace them. Go on foot. The enemy IED cells that target coalition and Iraqi Army units are small teams that number less than five individuals, given an average kill zone. These bad guys are predictable for when and where they strike with IEDs. They are, however, no match for a squad of well-trained and heavily armed Infantrymen maneuvering on them from a direction they least expect. A bunch of insurgents in sweat pants and Addidas shoes with Ak-47s are no match for our Infantrymen. They are no match for many Iraqi Army units as well.

However, believe it or not, many Coalition, and now unfortunately Iraqi Army forces, desire to execute what some call “movements-to-explosions” in west Baghdad. Instead of getting out on a foot patrol and maneuvering along unlikely mobility corridors and lateral routes to execute patrols, they, instead, travel in their armored vehicles, with limited visibility, down known and highly visible avenues of approach. The enemy knows our patterns. They know we are painfully predictable when it comes to using our beloved armored vehicles. They are also very successful at blowing those vehicles up and causing Coalition and Iraqi deaths and injuries because of them.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion received 15 M1114s in July, 2006. Ever since that time, they have been tied to their vehicles and afraid to venture out of foot patrols to execute reconnaissance and combat patrols. They perceive the sniper threat and small arms threat to be too great to risk such an adventure. In some cases, the training of simple squad battle drills was lacking, and it shook their confidence to operate on foot independent of Coalition forces (hence the friction I received when I first attempted to get them to execute night foot patrols with my team). The 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, unfortunately, learned this by watching a majority of U.S. forces, who merely orbit their AO, waiting to either be engaged by the insurgents with small arms fire or hoping to not encounter an IED as they drive around for 8 to 12 hours at a time.

In my experience in west Baghdad, many U.S. units discovered that their submariner reliance on their M1114s was, in reality, causing greater risk to an IED attack than actually dismounting and maneuvering into an area from an alternate direction. In this manner, they maximize surprise, visibility, and ability to see and

engage the enemy first. The fear introduced to enemy and civilians alike when they see Coalition and Iraqi squads and platoons in wedge and column formations, moving in a disciplined manner, is also a great advantage we give up when we go on a “mounted only” patrol. Units, like the 1-325 AIR, that inherited dangerous areas saturated by JAM, executed foot patrols only and disrupted much of the enemy militia’s lines of communication and ability to emplace IED kill zones. Now that many Coalition units execute foot patrols in many of the most dangerous areas of their battle-space, the challenge many MiTT leaders and I had to contend was breaking the Iraqi security forces of their reliance on vehicles for their sole protection.

Foot patrols engender themselves to greater trust by the people living in the contested mulhallas. Going on foot slows down the patrol. Locals, who at one time, saw only security forces drive-by them now see Iraqi and Coalition forces walking by them, talking to them, and asking questions about threats to them and their families. Information flyers with critical contact information can be easily distributed. Critical neighborhood watch programs that place Iraqi units, like the 4<sup>th</sup> IA Battalion, in the lead can be reinforced by constant saturation of pedestrian patrolling. By demonstrating concern for their welfare, many civilian “fence-sitters” may choose to trust Coalition and Iraqi forces and may, in turn, share intelligence about enemy forces in the area. Concerned civilians start to volunteer to become informants and sources for enemy movements, and can open their shops and allow their kids to play in the streets with confidence that there is always an Iraqi or Coalition force nearby that can respond quickly. Civilians who act as auxiliaries for the enemy forces become frightened to act, and therefore neutralized. In essence, the foot patrols deny terrain to the enemy, both urban and civilian, which mere mounted patrols alone fail to accomplish.

As a MiTT leader, I fought constantly with Sabah to order more dismounted patrols for his battalion. Additionally, the Iraqi S2 disdained the IPB process and chose to focus on source operations only. With dedicated Coalition units that patrol on foot with their 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion partners and intelligence officers willing to assist my trainers to demonstrate IPB techniques, I enjoyed an easier sales pitch for these ideas. Identifying the terrain and enemy capabilities and predicting enemy courses of action greatly assisted units to avoid and counter IEDs. Area denial and information collection increases when units routinely engage the population in a personal and sincere manner: going on foot is the way to win civilian support for their Army.

### **Battlefield Enablers: Invite Everyone to the Party**

As a MiTT advisor, you will find many interesting units and organizations operating within your battle-space. Not only will you see Iraqi Army, Police, Special Police and coalition forces in your area, but you will start to see various “alphabet soup” intelligence agencies, news media, civilian reconstruction teams, and maybe even some U.S. State Department folks working in the same area. As a MiTT advisor, you must take the lead to help get these organizations to work together, or at the very least, be aware of each other.

The U.S. ODA teams all have differing missions and may not want to share or work with MiTTs whatsoever. Ironical as it may seem, the training of indigenous populations, a one-time Special Forces core competency, didn't appear to be a focus for them. That being said, most of their strategic intelligence they glean requires the cooperation of trusted Iraqi security forces to help collect, corroborate and provide action on intelligence. By approaching the ODA Team in a manner that was mutually beneficial to us and my Iraqi Battalion, the SOF soldiers agreed to help train portions of our Iraqi battalion in reconnaissance, marksmanship, and combative physical training. These were instructor skill sets my MiTT Team lacked and excited the Iraqi Jundi to finally get an opportunity for some good, hard training to build up their confidence. In exchange for source and intelligence sharing, as well as going on targeted raids and reconnaissance missions, the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 1-6 IA, got the opportunity to re-zero their weapons and re-blue their Infantry skills by doing some hard training with our SF brothers on the same FOB. Iraqi morale increased, bonds were forged, and the ODA team got to build better intelligence networks and work relationships with our IA battalion.

As a MiTT advisor, there are plenty of coalition organizations in the area that can assist you with intelligence. Even though you may have a partnered unit with its own digital Command Post of the Future (CPOF) and intelligence of its area, you still must fight for intelligence about your AO, your Iraqi security forces with which you're working, and the surrounding civilian personalities who dwell in your battle-space. There is so much information available and so many different organizations there collecting it that not many intelligence fusion cells exist to "piece the intelligence picture together." Regarding the various "special units" that operate in Baghdad, not many are going to contact you and offer assistance. Some of these organizations included cross-teams of FBI and other U.S. law-enforcement personnel, as well as the many intelligence agencies that go by different names in Iraq. It's amazing how many of these special coalition Intel / law enforcement task forces can share information with you once you merely ask them for assistance. It always helps to bring a certain aspect of intelligence that would interest them in the process. As a MiTT advisor, you are in an interesting role to not only train, but may be used to collect intelligence concerning your Iraqi security forces. My team and I witnessed extensive enemy insurgent infiltration, weapons smuggling, and other criminal activities associated with our Iraqi battalion. Such first-hand information is valuable to many of these organizations and can be used by your MiTT to assist in building packets and case files for these special organizations. In exchange for this information, they can and will share information regarding targets, intelligence, and human factor information, such as sectarian infiltration routes and ethnic cleansing areas of focus. This information helps you understand where the enemy is, define enemy kill zones, and determine how the enemy is trying to target you and your team. It also assisted me in focusing operations for the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion to be successful. Take the lead as a MiTT leader and invite all these organizations to play in your AO. I learned this late in my tour and wish I could have taken advantage of this sooner. There is too much information at stake to not take advantage of this idea.



## **Introduce Positive Reinforcement**

Using medals and certificates of valor and achievement by our own creation, my team and I introduced positive motivation to the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion Jundi. So much of the discipline used by the Iraqi commanders was centered upon negative reinforcement. Taking a week's pay, dressing down soldiers in public, firing them outright, and threatening Jundi were all common place. In a culture that reveres strength and disdains weakness, I first had to demonstrate to the Iraqi leadership that I was strong and used an uncompromising, no-nonsense approach to win rapport with LTC Sabah and his commanders. Once this was accomplished, I turned my attention to showing the Iraqi command a different way to get Jundi to perform their jobs well. I started complimenting good behavior and rewarding those Iraqi Jundi that executed the standard. I honored them and reprimanded them when they deserved it. I had a creative MiTT S2 Captain who invented medals for valor and extreme valor on his computer. We sent these designs to a U.S. manufacturer and had them made especially for our Iraqis. The cost came out of our own pockets, but it was more than worth it. The jundi were instantly overwhelmed with pride and longed for more praise by working harder. The Iraqi Jundi pined for recognition and were motivated by these never before seen awards. I was not partnered with a coalition battalion at the time, and we did not have a means in which to request U.S. Army Achievement Medals and Army Commendation Medals for the deserving Iraqis. Many MiTTs now are assigned to U.S. formations and can now recommend official medals for their deserving Iraqi counterparts.

These medals were an opportunity for me and the MiTT Team to recognize publicly the heroism and sacrifice demonstrated by these often neglected Soldiers. These medals, once presented by a U.S. officer personally to them, became a legitimate foreign award that could be worn on their uniforms. Presented to them in mass formations, we showed LTC Sabah how to reward accordingly and provided him an opportunity to address and compliment his soldiers *en mass*. Eventually, LTC Sabah's S1 began creating the battalion's own certificates of achievement, and LTC Sabah began holding formations on his own to honor his Jundi. Using a combination of positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement, LTC Sabah saw his battalion's morale increase exponentially. Using good solid leadership, we showed the Iraqi leadership one way to provide purpose, direction, and motivation to their Jundi.

## **Define a Training & Operations Model to Fit Them**

The Iraqi Army needs a training concept. Currently, training is done half-heartedly or not at all. The Iraqi Army, falling under the Ministry of Defense, is required to work 15 days straight and then allows Iraqi jundi five days off to go home, pay their families, and execute tribal obligations. This work/release cycle is non-negotiable to all Iraqi leadership. As such, the Iraq Army engages in a Fight-Fight – Fight - Leave training strategy. In practice, 25% of the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion was gone on leave. All four rifle companies and its HSC Company were reduced to 75% manning to fight. This left no room for training and maintenance. Training occurred

“on-the-job.” Except for basic training and combat, Iraqi Jundi never get a dedicated opportunity to fire their weapons for marksmanship practice. Maintenance was nearly never done to standard or even treated seriously. Over time, uniforms, equipment and jundi become tired, ineffective, and eventually worn out. Though some coalition units are making use of joint patrols to train individual, collective, and leader tasks they, in fact, have codified, most of the Iraqi Army lacks a means by which to achieve balance in combat, training, maintenance, and rest. My answer to this would be to develop and implement a training and operational cycle akin to our own in the U.S. Army, but do it on their terms.

Based on the four-rifle company MTOE, it is possible to develop a training and operational cycle that still meets the constraint of 25% jundi on leave. This cycle would be based on a 20-day cycle, with company rotations occurring every five days and meets the Ministry of Defense requirement for five days off for every 15 days of consecutive work. Additionally, it is possible to also have one IA company dedicated to training, maintenance, and limited missions as well. Calling it a Fight-Train-Leave-Fight rotation, the Iraqi Army could implement a system much like our Green-Amber-Red training/operational cycle. The Fight or “green companies” would be manned 100% and would execute continuous fighting for five days straight. Another company, the Train or “amber” company, would execute command maintenance on all their assigned equipment and execute individual task training such as first aid, marksmanship and communication skills for five days. The remaining Leave or “red” company would be 100% on leave for five days. The IA HSC company would still rotate jundi home and would have 25% of the support personnel and staff gone at any given time. One of the “green” companies would get stuck with fifteen consecutive days fighting at 100% strength, but after that the cycle would right itself. The specialty platoons within HSC Company would also rotate through training and maintenance along with the IA rifle companies. The lack of Jundi out in the fight would be augmented by greater participation by Iraqi Police into the patrol schedule. The tactical footprint also becomes increased with the advent of dedicated U.S. units partnered with the Iraqi companies on the “green” Fight status.

Based on an agreed upon METL, a task list for all individual, collective, and leader training list would need to be developed and approved for use by the Ministry of Defense (MOD). Currently, neither MOD, nor the Iraq Assistance Group, officially recognizes any such ARTEP manuals for Iraqi Army specific training. The METL is depicted differently depending on who you ask. The Iraq Assistance Group and coalition BCTs have differing opinions concerning what ought to be the Iraqi Army METL. Much of the training we provided our Iraqi battalion came from directly from U.S. doctrine, or from guidance from the much generalized Transition Readiness Assessment, a monthly review of Iraqi units, much akin to our USR reporting. Many Coalition brigades are forced to improvise the training by the seat of their pants. Some were successful. Some were not.

One such successful brigade that developed a METL for the Iraqi units it worked with was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade (Dagger), 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division. COL J.B. Burton mandated that a METL be developed, cross-walked, and refined to incorporate individual, collective and leader tasks tailored to the Iraqi Army. Once completed,

this METL served as a model for all training conducted in a combined effort with Coalition, transition teams, and Iraqi Army units within the 2/1 ID AO. Because no formal training/operations cycle was in existence, collective training was to occur during actual combat and reconnaissance patrols. One example COL Burton used was to train battle drill #6: Enter and Clear a Room. A coalition patrol and an Iraqi patrol would move to an Iraq muhalla, pay an Iraqi civilian money for use of his house, and practice techniques for breaching a house, and battle drills for a few hours. Not only did the Jundi get trained by the Americans in a combat environment, but the presence of both forces in zone garnered the confidence of the Iraqi locals. The Iraqi Jundi learned the art of room clearing and tactical site exploitation from the Americans in a hands-on fashion. This type of training was extended to tactical checkpoints, ambushes, raids, and close target reconnaissance. By doing this, the Coalition units partnered with the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 1-6 IA Division, were provided clear tasks and purposes, were motivated to not only “baby-sit” their Iraqi counterparts, but to train them in functional combat roles to secure their own neighborhoods. It was a creative and effective technique to train the Iraqis, while conducting combat operations.

The role of the MiTT teams in this process is one of scheduling, patrol oversight, and Iraqi staff training and battle command training. I was fortunate to be the “micro-scope” into the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion for my partnered Coalition unit. My team and I assisted in the refinement of the IA METL and associated battle tasks; prepared the Transition Readiness Assessment every month to provide feedback for the Iraqi training progress; and assisted with the scheduling of missions, patrols, and training for the Iraqi command and staff. Eventually, I was able to coach LTC Sabah into providing his own form of commander’s intent to his subordinates and was able to assist his S3 in planning a TCP and patrol matrix that facilitated his unit’s training with our coalition partners. My MiTT staff trainers were able to focus on developing IPB and maintenance and logistics systems and train a very basic model of MDMP and orders production. Earlier in my tour as a MiTT Chief, I was unable to focus my team in this way because of all the coverage we provided the Iraqi platoons and companies. Now, with a dedicated U.S. partner that had a vested interest in training, I was able to train LTC Sabah, his commanders and his staff using the full knowledge and skill sets of my team. I reported directly to LTC Jim Nicholas, the 2-12 CAB commander, whose battalion was partnered with the 1-6 IA Brigade. I, in a sense, became a third field grade officer for his battalion’s efforts to secure its portion of western Baghdad. My MiTT had a great relationship with 2-12 CAB, and we were able to accomplish much in the way of COIN in my remaining two months of my tour.

Currently, no training and operational cycle exists regarding the whole Iraqi Army force. Even though it is a great idea that can be applied to the whole force, it requires the approval of the Ministry of Defense to implement it. The top-down hierarchy of the Iraqis forces this issue to be addressed in this manner. It takes the efforts of our Multi-National Corps – Iraq (MNCI) and Multinational Forces – Iraq (MNF-I) commanders, in my opinion, to coax the Iraqi Security Forces to adopt this technique. It can only benefit everyone concerned to do so. Not only would they achieve balance regarding combat, training, maintenance and rest, but their

institutional knowledge of war-fighting would increase over time, thereby reducing coalition presence over time.

## **Closing**

The fight in west Baghdad will improve with time. Combining Iraqi Army units, Police units, and Coalition units in unified action is the way to go. The MiTTs can expedite the training and implementation of this unified action by raising Iraqi Army awareness and levels of competency. Before Coalition units and MiTT teams can begin to leave the fight, Iraqi units must be able to mimic the basics of a COIN doctrine many MiTTs and coalition units are just now beginning to understand and implement. The MiTT's focus should be placed on leading by example, using all the coalition assets in a given area, and developing a training cycle to maximize the balance and effectiveness of their Iraqi counterparts.

My experience as a MiTT Team Chief was an overall positive one. It challenged my resolve, my patience, and my ability to lead not only Americans in combat, but Iraqis as well. It was an extremely dangerous business. A soldier of mine was killed, as were many U.S. Coalition Soldiers, and countless Iraqi soldiers. Scores more were wounded. Stability had its price and payment was all too often.

I believe I learned almost as much about how not to fight a counterinsurgency in my year's time there as I learned how to fight one. Upon my return to the United States, I picked up the new FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency manual and found it to be describing a doctrine I had learned the hard way. I had learned by doing: trial and error. I was pleased to see most of my assumptions and ideas turned out to be the correct ones in which to fight in a COIN environment. I also feel optimistic that our forces in Iraq are now getting COIN savvy and are fighting this war using appropriate techniques and doing it in a way that makes the Iraqis better.

MiTT may have "happened" to me without my choice, but I am glad it had. As I look forward to being an operations officer and executive officer in my own right, I can look back at my experiences to build upon when I return someday to Iraq. I know a lot more about the nature of the war there. I understand the suffering and the civil insurrection going on in their culture. I know some things about how to make their Army better, for their country's sake. Transition Teams can be extremely useful if used to the end to make the Iraqi security forces the heroes in this fight. After all, it will be only through their definition of achieving victory that our own military may someday achieve the same and come home.